

At the Alden House, A Party and Planning

By BEN CRONIN

The Alden Kindred of America held their 102nd Annual Meeting last weekend at the Alden Historical Site in Duxbury, home of John and Priscilla Alden, two of the original Pilgrims and among the earliest settlers of Duxbury.

The meeting drew participants from eighteen states and Canada, with two Civil War reenactment groups and over one hundred fifty people – most of them Aldens – in attendance

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Eric Willis of the Providence Brigade Band, a Civil War reenactment group from Rhode Island, plays cornet at the Alden Kindred's 102nd Annual Meeting.

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The Providence Brigade Band, a Civil War-era band from Rhode Island, is composed entirely of Alden descendants, and played at the event.

The Kindred, which has held Annual Meetings since 1900, is an organization of approximately fifteen hundred members, dedicated to the preservation of the house, spirit and tradition of the original Aldens. Its annual meeting may be its most well known event, with

dozens to hundreds of descendants gathering for a weekend in Duxbury, but its leadership is engaged in planning all year round. Acting Director Alden Ringquist says that the group wants to become more active in the community.

In this spirit, the Kindred plans to hold the Alden Open, a golf tournament on October 7th, at the Duxbury Yacht Club golf course, as well as a Halloween Haunted House and Thanksgiving "Cold Turkey Tours". Annual events are lim-

ited to the museum's operating months, which run from (roughly) April through November.

There is something deeper, though, to the Kindred's efforts to become more active in the community: the organization hopes to spread what it calls "Alden values" – family, community, and work. These, according to former President Bob Edmund, are values that "exemplify the Alden experience," as well as the experience of immigrants to the United

States throughout the centuries. The Kindred has produced one educational DVD so far, and hopes to convince schools to place it or programs like it on their curricula. Edmund is quick to point out, however, that the Kindred has no desire to impose its moral philosophy on school systems.

The group also hopes to change the Alden House's official designation – right now it's a National Historical Site, one of approximately 60,000 around the country; if the Kin-

dred succeeds in its application, the Alden House will be re-categorized as a National Historical Landmark, which is considerably more distinguished than Historical Site status. According to the Kindred's newsletter, the Alden historical site has a much better chance of receiving an upgrade to landmark status if the foundation of the original Alden house, which is on Town land, is included with the currently standing home. This raises the possibility of a joint Town-Kindred application

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to the Department of the Interior.

For the Kindred, the historical reasoning behind their quest for Landmark status is sound. Ringquist calls Duxbury's trove of Alden sites and artifacts "a treasure, as far as the town is concerned." It's certainly true that a lot of Alden descendants have been pretty prominent players in history; the family claims dozens of notable figures from the past, including Presidents John and John Quincy Adams (as well as a



Bob Edmund and Alden "Rink" Ringquist

President of Ireland and one of Czechoslovakia), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Marilyn Monroe (Monroe is a "probable but not provable Alden descendant"). White House Chief of Staff Andy Card has been a member, and is tied into the family tree, said the Kindred leadership. "Tom Thumb," a midget who performed for P.T. Barnum's circus, is also a likely Alden, falling into the same category as Miss Monroe. Today there are estimated to be around one mil-

lion living Alden descendants, a testament to both human desire and exponential mathematics.

The party may be over at the Alden House – the band's left, the reenactors have departed, the guests are gone away, leaving only the midsummer heat. But the planning process, less exciting than the Annual Meeting, continues. There is always next year's meeting, of course, and the one after that, and the one after that – perhaps held at a National Landmark.